

DATE: February 6, 2012

TO: The Michigan Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes

FROM: Kim Herman, 5257 JJ .5 Lane, Garden, MI 49835

RE: Public testimony on the Department of Natural Resources Living Legacies or Biodiversity Stewardship Area Program February 6, 2012, Gaylord MI

First I am a resident of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and am familiar with much of our state lands in both the lower and upper peninsula having worked in and recreated in our state forests, wildlife areas and parks much of my life. I hold a BA in Biology from Grand Valley State University and an MS in Botany/Plant Ecology from Michigan State University. I am a co-founder of the Wildflower Association of Michigan, Michigan Invasive Species Council, and Prescribed Fire Councils. I served as a board member for 15 years and within that time for four years as the national President of the Natural Areas Association. Those who know me, realize I am pragmatic in my practice and views regarding natural resource management and conservation.

I am 100% in favor of the Living Legacy goal and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Biodiversity Area Program: *To establish a statewide network of places that together best represent the diversity of our state's biological heritage (biodiversity) and that provide good opportunities for long-term conservation of the ecosystems that sustain Michigan's biological heritage.* The benefits to the people of the state of Michigan and future generations by moving strongly ahead with this program are immeasurably great. First and foremost the collaborative effort of the many stakeholders involved in this process is unprecedented and supports Michigan's State Forest dual sustainable Forestry Certification under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council. To pull back now after so much work and effort by talented and dedicated scientists, citizens, the forest products industry and conservationists could jeopardize our Michigan's sustainable forest certificates and the ability to market and sell our Michigan forest products.

More now than ever, the State of Michigan and Michigan Department of Natural Resources should be looking at the importance of sustaining and managing healthy and diverse ecosystems for the natural services they provide such as ground water recharge, watershed health, maintaining our native pollinators, sustaining forest health – such as genetic variation that includes disease resistant trees, resistance to invasive species and conversely to maintain species diversity including all native plants and animals, common or rare.

I often think about how much money and resources go into maintaining human health, just in the United States. We as humans represent one organism, yes a very special one, among many on this earth. As I age and see young people I have known, in their thirties, forties and fifties passing on, I cannot help but wonder at how helpless we find ourselves in staving off human suffering, when billions of dollars go annually towards medical research on diseases such as diabetes, arthritis and cancer.

Similarly, I look at our native ecosystems in Michigan and wonder at their complexity and realize humbly, how little we really know about how it all works. I wonder at how simplistic we can be to not realize how important the Michigan DNR's Living Legacy program is at this critical point in time to the future of our own life, the quality of which we so often take for granted here in Michigan – with its clean and abundant water and public lands.

I urge you to provide greater funding and resources to this important effort. I urge you to encourage the Director of the Department of Natural Resources to make the results of the statewide maps quickly and easily available to the public and to not waste the work already accomplished. Furthermore, funding should be sought after and secured for additional inventory by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory and to further important management needs such as prescribed fire, forest health and invasive species monitoring and control in our state forests, wildlife areas and parks.

Thank you for considering my testimony and making it part of the public record for this hearing.

Kim Herman